

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 06075 201406Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 /050 W

-----101674 210743Z /13

R 191421Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5268

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO USMISSION USNATO

USNMR SHAPE

USCINCEUR

UNCLAS LONDON 06075

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UK, MORG, MPOL

SUBJECT: THREAT OF UK OFFICER RESIGNATIONS FROM  
ARMED SERVICES

1. ON THE EVE OF CABINET CONSIDERATION OF THE ARMED FORCES PAY REVIEW BODY, FIGURES WERE LEAKED TO THE PRESS ASSOCIATION ON 18 APRIL WHICH DISCLOSED THAT OVER 1,000 BRITISH OFFICERS HAVE APPLIED FOR PREMATURE VOLUNTARY RELEASE FROM THEIR COMMISSION. OVER 900 OF THESE COME FROM THE ARMY AND, AS THE OPPOSITION HAS BEEN QUICK TO POINT OUT, IT REPRESENTS THE TOTAL OFFICER STRENGTH OF 30 BATTALIONS. ABOUT 470 RESIGNATIONS HAVE COME IN THE LAST FOUR WEEKS ALONE.

2. ALL OF TODAY'S QUALITY PAPERS GIVE PROMINENT COVERAGE TO SERVICE PAY AND CONDITIONS AND MAKE CLEAR THAT THE TIMING OF THE LEAK IS INTENDED TO INFLUENCE CABINET DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUE. THE ARMED FORCES PAY REVIEW BOARD IS BELIEVED TO HAVE RECOMMENDED PAY INCREASES WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT'S 10 PERCENT GUIDELINES. HOWEVER, IT IS EXPECTED THAT A NUMBER OF ADJUSTMENTS  
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IN SPECIAL RATES FOR SPECIFIC TRADES WILL BE MADE TO HELP REDRESS THE CURRENT INCOMPARABILITY BETWEEN PAY TO THE ARMED SERVICES AND SALARIES OBTAINABLE IN THE CIVIL SECTOR.

3. ON THE BASIS OF THE LEAKED FIGURES, MRS. THATCHER, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, PRESSED THE PRIME MINISTER

HARD IN COMMONS TO GIVE THE SERVICES AN INCREASE OVER THE 10 PERCENT GUIDELINES. THE PRIME MINISTER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE LEAKED FIGURES WERE PROBABLY CORRECT AND HE PROMISED THE SERVICES "A SQUARE DEAL -- NOT MORE AND NO LESS." THE DIFFICULTY FACING THE CABINET IS TO FIND A PAY FORMULA WHICH WILL RESTORE COMPARABILITY WITHOUT BREAKING THE GOVERNMENT'S PAY POLICY. BUT WITH SERVICE PAY IN MANY INSTANCES WELL BELOW 30 PERCENT OF CIVILIAN RATES -- AND WITH SOME MEMBERS OF THE CABINET BELIEVED NOT TO BE PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED BY THE ARGUMENT THAT THE ARMED FORCES PAY CLAIMS DESERVE "SPECIAL TREATMENT" -- THE SERVICES REMAIN FEARFUL THAT THE OUTCOME WILL FALL SUBSTANTIALLY SHORT OF THEIR EXPECTATIONS.

4. IN VIEW OF THE DIFFICULTIES FACING THE CABINET IN FINDING A SOLUTION WHICH WILL NOT BLATANTLY BREAK THE PAY CODE, THE PAY AWARD WHICH OFFICIALLY WAS DUE TO BE MADE ON 1 APRIL IS NOW LIKELY TO BE DEFERRED UNTIL NEXT WEEK.

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014